

Arizona EQIP Program

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land.
- Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process.

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- Persons engaged in livestock or agricultural production are eligible for the program.
- Persons interested in entering into a contractual agreement with USDA-NRCS for EQIP assistance may file an application at any time.

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- *Land Eligibility:*
Eligible lands are lands on which agricultural commodities or livestock are produced. This includes:
 - • Cropland;
 - • Rangeland;
 - • Grassland;

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- • Pasture land;
- • Private, non-industrial forestland: and
- • Other land determined to pose a serious threat to soil, air, water, or related resources

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To be eligible to participate, applicants must:

- Be an agricultural producer; (there must be an annual minimum of \$1,000 of agricultural products produced and/or sold from the operation)
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill;

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- Have an interest in the farming operation associated with the land being offered for enrollment in EQIP.
- Have control of the land for the term of the contract.
- Have an irrigation history 2 of the last 5 years prior to applying for EQIP.

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- The Adjusted Gross Income (AGI): for Individuals or entities that have an average AGI greater than \$2.5 million for the three tax years immediately preceding the years the contract is approved are not eligible to receive program benefits or payments.
- Exception: An exemption is provided that 75% of AGI comes from farming, ranching or forestry operations.
- A \$450,000 cap was established for each EQIP contract.

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To be eligible to participate, applicants must:

Develop an EQIP plan of operations, including:

- The participant's specific conservation and environmental objectives to be achieved;

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Develop an EQIP plan of operations, including:

- One or more conservation practices to be implemented to achieve the conservation and environmental objectives; and
- The schedule for implementing the conservation practices.

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NRCS works with the participant to develop the EQIP plan of operations. This plan becomes the basis of the agreement between NRCS and the participant. NRCS provides payments to landowners under these agreements that can be up to 10 years in duration.

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- EQIP is a competitive program. Applicants conservation plans are ranked to establish which applications will achieve the highest environmental benefits and be selected for contract development.

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- Ranking
- How are applications ranked?

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- **Guidelines for Ranking Applicants**
 - What practices can be contracted, and when are environmental benefit points awarded?
- When both of the following apply:
 - 1. A resource problem exists that does not meet Arizona NRCS Quality Criteria (minimum standard to meet the resource concern threshold level).

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■ Guidelines for Ranking Applicants

- 2. One or more new conservation practices must be applied to address the resource problem to achieve quality criteria as identified in the Field Office Technical Guide. All new conservation practices that are required to achieve quality criteria for the resource problem must be included in the contract, and must be cost shared.

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■ Guidelines for Ranking Applicants

- New conservation practices include significantly modified management practices, and replacement of structural practices that have exceeded their expected life span
- Work that is considered maintenance of a previously installed conservation practice cannot be included in an EQIP contract

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- NRCS-CPA 1200 “Conservation Program Application”
- NRCS-CPA-1202 “Conservation Program Contract”
- NRCS-CPA-1202 “Appendix”
- CCC 526 “Adjusted Gross Income Certification”
- SF-1199A – the “Direct Deposit Sign-Up form”
- CCC 501A – Member’s Information (for entity and joint operations only)
- AD-1026 the “Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification”

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- Arizona NRCS Website:
<http://www.az.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>
- 2007 Final EQIP rule can be found at:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>

The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008

- 2008 Farm Bill Highlights

Conservation Opportunities

INCREASES SUPPORT OF WORKING LAND CONSERVATION

Environmental Quality Incentives Program is a critical element of USDA conservation programs

- ✓ Increases funding above the current law by \$3.4 billion in budget authority over the next ten years

EQIP Key Points

Reauthorized until 2012

Validates NRCS forestry activities by specifically referencing forest management

Expanded to include energy conservation benefits associated with conservation practices

Places a priority on reduction of water use or no new lands irrigated

EQIP Key Points (2)

Broader scope of conservation payments to include:

- ✓ Specific Planning activities beyond CNMP
- ✓ Build on management intensity concepts of CSP enhancements
- ✓ Payments fit Green Box for WTO

Air quality practices \$37.5 million per year (2009-2012)

EQIP Key Points (3)

For organic producers:

Specific section on assistance with conservation practices utilized for organic production and transition

Payments for practices with organic production benefits limited to not more than \$20,000 per year; \$80,000 in 6 years

EQIP Key Points (4)

For limited resource, socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers:

- ✓ Up to 90 percent cost share or at least 25 percent above the otherwise applicable rate
- ✓ Advance payments to cover up to 30% of the cost of materials to install conservation improvements

EQIP Funding

Fiscal Year	Dollar Amount
2008	\$1,200,000,000
2009	\$1,337,000,000
2010	\$1,450,000,000
2011	\$1,588,000,000
2012	\$1,750,000,000

EQIP Payment Limitations

Environmental Quality Incentives Program
(EQIP) Payment Limitations

\$300,000 per person over a six-year period

Up to \$450,000 per person over a six-year
period may be authorized for projects of
environmental significance

Thanks

